A CONCISE SUMMARY OF CHARLES DUHIGG'S

The Power of Habit

...in 30 minutes

A 30 MINUTE EXPERT SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

The Power of Habit by Charles Duhigg takes a seemingly humdrum topic — the formation of habits — and demonstrates how powerful they are in driving our behavior at several different levels — on a personal basis, in business and government, and socially.

The central thesis of the book is that, through understanding habit formation and operation, we can re-form habits into healthier and more productive patterns.

Duhigg unpacks the latest scientific research, utilizing case studies along the way to demonstrate the powerful impact that harnessing habit can have. He shows how corporations anticipate and target consumer behavior, how social and religious movements marshal followers, and how governmental and health institutions transform groups and culture. Finally, he explores how individuals can radically transform their lives by replacing detrimental habits with positive ones.

In short, this is a practical, easy-to-read book for anyone interested in understanding the formation and impact of habits.

About the Author

Charles Duhigg is an investigative reporter for *The New York Times*, the winner of several prestigious awards (including the National Academy of Sciences and National Journalism awards), and is a frequent contributor to *PBS NewsHour* and *Frontline,* as well as several other programs.

How the Book Came About

Duhigg became interested in the science of habits while reporting from Baghdad during the Second Gulf War. During his time there, he realized that a key component of U.S.

military operations is the formation of habit. Good habits are, after all, what keep soldiers alive. Duhigg's observations were more nuanced than this, though. He noticed that certain officers intuitively understood habit to a greater degree, recognizing not only those of their own soldiers, but also those of Iraqis and of violence-prone mobs. This appreciation for habit enabled these officers to better impact the outcomes of situations. At this point, Duhigg realized how powerful habit is and decided to explore the topic in a broader context.

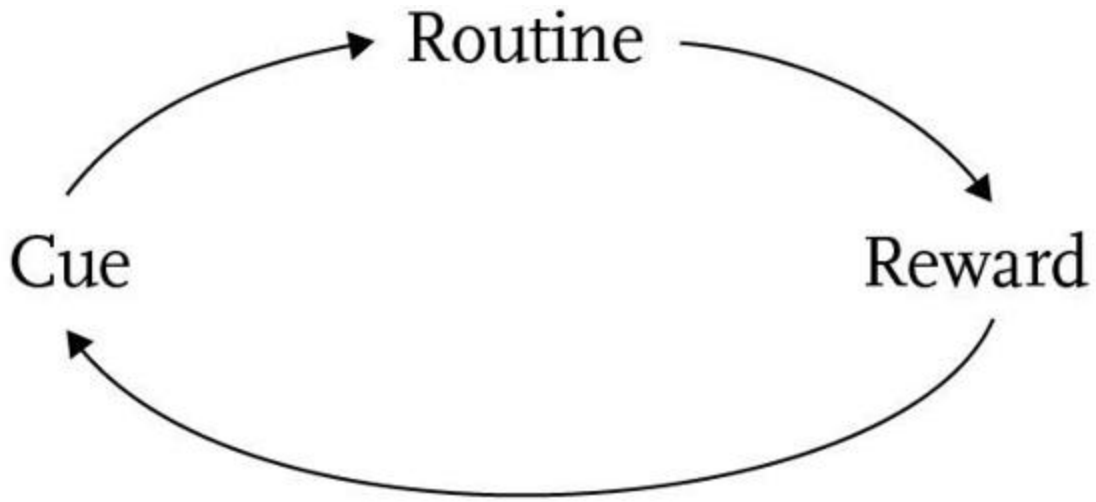
What's the Big Idea?

Driving Duhigg's contention that habits shape our lives at many different levels is a simple but compelling idea: The *will to believe* is the most important ingredient in enacting change in our lives, and this will is created and supported through habits. In other words, through changing a habit, change becomes real.

But this isn't simply another book about personal change. Duhigg additionally demonstrates how the power of habit can be a tremendous and positive force in shaping corporations (Alcoa), social movements (the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s), and government (the Office of Budget and Management).

Breakdown of the Big Idea

Thanks to scientific research, we now not only know that habits are powerful actors, but also understand *how* they are created. This process is called the "Habit Loop," and it looks like this:



The Habit Loop

In basic terms, a *Cue* is a trigger that sends your brain into automatic mode and tells it which habit to use. A simple example is the act of smelling freshly baked cookies.

This aroma may trigger a *Routine,* which can be physical, emotional, mental, or a combination of the three. In the case of smelling cookies, the routine may be to go buy one.

This results in a *Reward*, which helps your brain figure out if a loop is worth following. In the cookie scenario, the reward is the satisfaction of hunger, whether real or perceived. Of course, this routine can result in weight gain over time and the formation of a “bad” habit.

Duhigg points out that there is a golden rule of habit change: You can’t extinguish a bad habit; you can only change it! This explains why bad habits are sometimes very difficult to change, no matter how good our intentions are.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Prologue: The Habit Cure

The Big Idea

In the prologue, Duhigg states the theme of his book: “Habits can be changed if we understand how they work.” He applies the principles of habit-change not only to individuals, but to businesses, social movements, and government institutions as well.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

Using the latest scientific research, Duhigg argues that we know how habits emerge, how they change, and how to break them into parts and rebuild them to our specifications. He divides the book into three sections:

- Section 1 focuses on how habits emerge within individual lives.
- Section 2 examines the habits of successful companies and organizations.
- Section 3 looks at the habits of society.

At the end of the prologue, Duhigg lands on a positive note: Changing habits isn’t always easy, but it is more possible than ever before due to groundbreaking research on the subject.

Chapter Summary

In his prologue, Duhigg introduces the power of habits (and the ability to change them) through the personal examples of “Lisa” (a woman who effected remarkable change in her life) and an Army major in Iraq who learned how to peacefully disperse angry crowds through an intuitive understanding of habits.

> "I'm telling you, if a hick like me can learn this stuff, anyone can. I tell my soldiers all the time, there's nothing you can't do if you get the habits right."
>
> — Army Major

Duhigg backs up his central thesis ("Habits can be changed if we understand how they work") with data from hundreds of academic studies, interviews with more than 300 scientists and executives, and research conducted at dozens of companies. His resources are available in the book's index, and at http://www.thepowerofhabit.com.

> **Did you know?** According to one study, 40 percent of the actions people perform each day aren't actual decisions, but habits.

The formation of habits — both good and bad — is a function of our neurology. Once we understand our neurology, we can then rebuild habit patterns in any way we choose, on a personal, corporate, or institutional level.

Prologue: Key Points

- Habits can be changed if we understand how they work.
- The principles of habit change can be applied to individuals, businesses, institutions, and societal movements alike.
- Habit formation is a function of our neurology; once we understand that neurology, we can rebuild habit patterns any way we wish.

THE HABIT LOOP
How Habits Work

The Big Idea

The effect of neurology upon habit-formation had never been clearly understood until scientists uncovered the workings of the primitive part of the brain called the *basil ganglia*. It's central to recalling patterns and acting on them, and it stores habits even when the rest of the brain goes to sleep. The basil ganglia uses a process called "chunking" to form habits. That is, it converts a sequence of actions into an automatic routine. This process is at the very heart of habit formation, from simple habits like brushing your teeth to the complex task of driving a car.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

Scientific understanding of neurology has transformed our understanding of habits and how they're formed. As explained in the introduction, there is a three-step loop for creating a habit:

1. A "cue," which is a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to use.
2. A "routine, " which can be physical, emotional, or mental.
3. A "reward," which helps your brain decide whether or not a loop is worth remembering.

This knowledge is crucial because it helps us understand how habits work and, thus, makes them easier to control.

There is a key caveat, though. The basil ganglia portion of the brain can’t always distinguish between a positive habit and a destructive one, thereby complicating our ability to successfully mediate our own patterns.

Chapter Summary

We know habits can be both highly advantageous and deeply destructive, but why do we form them in the first place? In this chapter, Duhigg argues that understanding the formation of habits is key to being able to change them.

According to scientific research, we form habits because the brain is constantly looking for new ways to save energy. The more habits we form, the more efficiently our brains can operate. From an evolutionary perspective, an efficient brain requires less space, which makes for a smaller head, which, in turn, makes childbirth easier and, therefore, causes fewer mother and infant deaths. An efficient brain also permits us to stop thinking constantly about basic behaviors (such as walking), so we can devote mental energy to “inventing spears, irrigation systems, and, eventually, airplanes and video games.”

The basil ganglia portion of the brain is older and more primitive than the brain’s outer layers. Through the Habit Loop, the basil ganglia establishes cues, routines, and rewards, and makes them more and more automatic over time. As mentioned earlier, however, the basil ganglia can’t distinguish between good and bad habits. Bad habits, then, are always “lurking there, waiting for the right cues and rewards.”

This explains why overcoming bad habits and replacing them with good ones can often take an intrepid effort. In fact, some habits are so strong that they can cause our brains to hang on to them to the exclusion of common sense (e.g., the gambling addict’s belief that he has a “big win” right around the corner, etc.).

Chapter 1: Key Points

- We form habits because the brain is constantly looking for new ways to save energy.
- The *basil ganglia* is central to habit-formation; however, it can't distinguish between good and bad habits.
- The basil ganglia's inability to distinguish makes it difficult to overcome bad habits and replace them with good ones, even when common sense tells us we should do so.

THE CRAVING BRAIN
How to Create New Habits

The Big Idea

Cravings power the Habit Loop and are what make cues and rewards work. In other words, habits derive their strength from cravings. In the business sector, Duhigg says that understanding the science of cravings is revolutionizing marketing and sales efforts.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

While cravings power the Habit Loop, there are mechanisms to help us ignore temptations. However, in order to do this, we must recognize which craving is driving our behavior. Once we identify the craving, we can more easily create a new habit. In this chapter, Duhigg takes the subject of cravings beyond the individual and into the marketplace. In fact, he says the identification of the correct rewards for cravings is essential to the success of a consumer product or service.

Chapter Summary

American businesses have always intuitively understood the need to create “cravings” for their products and services. Let’s return to the cookie example we looked at earlier.

As a specific example, Duhigg cites the tactic of Cinnabon. It always situates its mall stores away from the food court so the smell of cinnamon rolls can waft down the hallways uninterrupted by other food smells, effectively creating a craving in anyone who encounters the odor.

But today, with science to power their efforts, businesses no longer need to rely on natural rewards like cravings for food. In order to make a product successful, they instead can apply the elements of the Habit Loop: Cue, Routine, and Reward. Identifying the reward is especially important!

To illustrate the significance of correctly identifying the reward, Duhigg cites Procter & Gamble's odor-eliminating product, *Febreze.* When it was first introduced into the market, *Febreze* was a dud. It worked exactly as intended, but didn't sell for a simple reason: people couldn't detect most of the bad smells in their lives. For example, a cat owner becomes accustomed to the smell of cats and isn't worried about those smells. As a result, there was no craving for the product, even though it worked.

P&G researchers finally identified the correct "craving" by interviewing a woman who said, "I don't use *Febreze* for odors. I use it after cleaning. It's a nice way to make everything smell good as a final touch." She and other women enjoyed using the product because it made them feel as though they had completely accomplished the task of cleaning. This was the reward for using *Febreze*.

By promoting the correct reward in P&G's advertising, *Febreze* and its spin-offs now generate sales of more than $1 billion per year. In the end, P&G got the reward right and reaped the benefits of understanding consumer behavior.

Chapter 2: Key Points

- Cravings are what make cues and rewards work; they power the Habit Loop.
- Habits are so strong because they create neurological cravings.
- Identification of the correct rewards for neurological cravings is essential to the success of a consumer product or service.

THE GOLDEN RULE OF HABIT CHANGE
Why Transformation Occurs

The Big Idea

The premise that it is possible to transform a habit, but not get rid of it completely, is what Duhigg calls the golden rule of habit change.

Multiple studies have shown that you can't completely get rid of bad habits. Instead, in order to change a bad habit you must keep the old cue and deliver the old reward while inserting a new routine. This new routine must satisfy old cues and reward urges.

According to Duhigg, the Golden Rule has influenced not only sports coaches (in terms of positive motivation), but also treatments for alcoholism, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and dozens of other self-destructive behaviors.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

At the core of the Golden Rule is the need for a method for attacking bad habits. Duhigg recognizes that there is not a specific set of steps that is guaranteed to change bad habits. What *is* guaranteed, however, is the following: In order to change habits, people must first believe this change is possible.

Chapter Summary

The Golden Rule of habit change is a powerful tool for creating change in individuals and organizations. Duhigg provides proof via several examples, but the one that figures

most prominently involves Tony Dungy, the famed NFL coach.

Dungy took the opposite approach of most coaches, who believed that the most complicated schemes won games. Dungy believed the opposite — he simply wanted his team to be faster than their opponents. In order to accomplish this, he taught his players only a handful of plays, but had them practice those plays over and over again until the behaviors were automatic. The result was that his players didn't need to think as much during a game and could rely on their habits. This gave Dungy's players a small but significant advantage. They were faster than their opponents because they had eliminated the time required for decision-making. Everything became a reaction, driven by correct habits.

> "Champions don't do extraordinary things. They do ordinary things, but they do them without thinking, too fast for the other team to react. They follow the habits they've learned."
>
> — Tony Dungy, Super Bowl-winning coach

Duhigg stresses that the key to changing a habit, whether on the football field or in the life of an alcoholic, is belief. Once people learn to believe in something, they start believing they can change other parts of their lives. That's why Alcoholics Anonymous works well for its members: the organization is focused on instilling belief in the possibility of change.

Chapter 3: Key Points

- Habit change must occur through transformation because it is not possible to completely vanquish a habit.
- In order to change a bad habit, you must keep the old cue and deliver the old reward, but insert a new routine. That new routine must satisfy old cues and reward urges.
- The key to changing a habit is belief.
- Once people learn how to believe in something, they start believing they can change other parts of their lives.

KEYSTONE HABITS, OR THE BALLAD OF PAUL O'NEILL
Which Habits Matter Most

The Big Idea

A *keystone habit* is crucial to effecting change in organizations. Such habits are ones that shift, dislodge, and remake other patterns. They're based on identifying a few key priorities and then fashioning those priorities into "powerful levers." By attacking one habit, changes ripple through a stodgy or moribund company or institution and positively transform the culture.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

Keystone habits can remake an organization or institution by creating "small wins"; that is, they help other habits flourish by creating new structures and establishing cultures where change becomes contagious. Good organizational habits create success; bad organizational habits breed failure or outright disaster.

> "Small wins are a steady application of a small advantage."
>
> — Cornell professor, 1984

Chapter Summary

This chapter is devoted to the power of keystone habits. Their impact is illustrated with examples from Paul O'Neill (Alcoa and federal government positions), Michael Phelps

(Olympic swimming champion), and LGBT rights organizations. In each of these cases, keystone habits were leveraged to create small wins in order to transform organizations and individuals.

For example, when Paul O'Neill took over Alcoa, the former powerhouse company had become stodgy and was steadily losing out to more aggressive competition. He immediately recognized that he needed a keystone topic to replace the usual meaningless corporate speak about "synergy … rightsizing … co-opetition" etc. It would only be through identifying a keystone that change would become possible.

The keystone O'Neill identified was safety. Everyone supported the idea of safety, and it was an extremely important part of Alcoa operations, where the mishandling of 2,000-degree molten aluminum can result in injury and/or death. O'Neill knew the subject had the potential to move the Alcoa "ship" back onto a profitable course.

Of course, at the first shareholders' meeting, O'Neill confused many people by talking about safety instead of employing the familiar buzzwords. He said very plainly that, in order to protect workers, "Alcoa needed to become the best, most streamlined aluminum company on earth." Shareholders felt panicked, but when the results of O'Neill's initiative came in a year later, Alcoa's profits had hit a record high. In fact, by the time Mr. O'Neill retired, the company's net income was five times bigger than before he arrived! And, in the process, he created one of the safest working environments in the world!

So, how did he achieve this remarkable turnaround? O'Neill established a Habit Loop within every unit of Alcoa that bound profit and safety. Any time a worker was injured, the unit president had to report to O'Neill within 24 hours, and only presidents who followed this procedure got promoted. This meant unit presidents had to be in constant communication with floor managers, and floor managers had

to get their workers to raise warnings and provide suggestions for safety improvements.

O’Neill’s action meant new communication systems had to be devised and put into place. The eventual result was a company-wide transformation. Alcoa became a safer place for workers and dramatically increased its profits. By addressing a keystone habit, O’Neill turned a stodgy old company into a streamlined and highly profitable winner.

Chapter 4: Key Points

- “Keystone” habits are crucial to effecting change in organizations.
- These habits shift, dislodge, and remake other patterns.
- The key is to identify one or a few keystone priorities and then fashion them into “powerful levers.”
- As a result, changes ripple through a company or institution and positively transform the culture.

STARBUCKS AND THE HABIT OF SUCCESS
When Willpower Becomes Automatic

The Big Idea

Building on the idea of keystone habits explored in the previous chapter, Duhigg focuses on the fact that willpower is an essential keystone habit. Citing scientific research, he points out that willpower is not just something an individual develops on his or her own; it can actually be taught and learned. In fact, many of today's successful businesses — like Starbucks — make it a core part of their training.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

Duhigg demonstrates through real-life examples that willpower is the single most important keystone habit for individual success. He also points out that the common belief that willpower is something you either have or don't have is false. Instead, willpower is a learnable skill. Once a person learns good willpower habits in one area, these habits spill over into other areas. And when corporations and institutions recognize this and turn self-discipline into an organizational habit, then they become highly successful.

Chapter Summary

Willpower is often thought of as an inherent quality: you either have it or you don't. But, as the author demonstrates in this chapter, willpower can actually be learned and turned into a habit.

He cites the example of a child of two drug-addicted parents. The child developed difficulties in getting along

with others, and struggled with keeping a job later in life as a result.

Eventually, he took a job with Starbucks and his life was changed. As Duhigg writes, the company “taught him how to live, how to focus, how to get to work on time, and how to master his emotions. Most crucially, it has taught him willpower.”

Teaching willpower is a crucial part of Starbucks’ overall business strategy for a simple business reason: it has an expensive product (for the coffee market), and executives recognized that the baristas needed to deliver more than just a $4 latte. They needed to deliver a “bit of joy” along with the coffee. In other words, Starbucks doesn’t just deliver coffee to its customers; it delivers a positive experience.

This experience is based on employees who have learned the keystone habit of willpower. They know how to handle difficult customers without exploding in anger or frustration because they’ve been taught specifically how to deal with difficult situations through the use of *willpower habit loops*.

Starbucks has dozens of routines for potentially troublesome situations (“inflection points,” in Duhigg’s language). These routines enable baristas to choose a certain behavior ahead of time, practice it intensively, and then let the habit kick in when an unhappy customer situation occurs.

This routine training also initiates a beneficial cycle: by instilling positive habits to automatically deal with negative situations, there is a decreased risk of negative situations occurring when you give employees decision-making authority. As a result, employees can be given increased authority. In turn, this increased decision-making authority not only further increases the employee’s willpower, but also their job commitment and morale.

Chapter 5: Key Points

- The most important keystone habit for individual success is willpower.
- Willpower is a highly learnable skill.
- The best way to strengthen willpower is to make it into a habit.
- Good willpower habits enable you to give employees an increased amount of decision-making authority. This increase in authority will then further increase willpower and overall job commitment.

THE POWER OF A CRISIS
How Leaders Create Habits Through Accident and Design

The Big Idea

Good leaders seize crises to remake organizational habits. Duhigg supports this theme with examples of serious mistakes made at Rhode Island Hospital and the London Underground Authority's disastrous handling of a fire. In both cases, leaders brought in to handle the crises used terrible times to overhaul entire cultures and remake them into smoothly functioning and highly responsive organizations.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

According to Duhigg, there are no organizations without institutional habits. Trouble arises when executives and other leaders fail to recognize this. In fact, destructive organizational habits are the product of leaders who avoid thinking about the culture and let it develop without guidance. However, leaders who know how to seize the right opportunities can transform destructive habits.

> "Much of firm behavior is best understood as a reflection of general habits and strategic orientations coming from the firm's past . . ." rather than ". . . the result of a detailed survey of the remote twigs of the decision tree."
>
> — Richard Nelson and Sidney Winter, *An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change*

Chapter Summary

Organizational crises are often the result of unmanaged cultures or cultures that have grown stale over many years. This lack of management can lead to disasters and even loss of life.

Duhigg cites the example of a corrosive culture at Rhode Island Hospital where doctors and nurses often clashed, resulting in surgical mistakes that caused the unnecessary death of patients.

Duhigg also references the London Underground Authority as an example of a culture that was so unmanaged and segmented that, when a fire erupted in 1987, no one acted because no one had the authority to do so. The result was the loss of 31 lives.

In both cases, leaders stepped in (or were brought in) to transform dysfunctional cultures into highly accountable ones.

In the case of the Rhode Island Hospital, the leader used the leverage created by the deaths to enlist doctors and nurses in a mission to make teamwork and communication a cultural, daily habit.

In the case of the London Underground, a special investigator appointed by the government ran into institutional roadblocks from an entrenched bureaucracy and overcame those obstacles by turning the inquiry into a "media circus" — a series of public hearings held over a 91-

day period. The resulting public outcry created pressure that couldn’t be denied. Heads rolled, and the entire culture was transformed into an organization rightfully concerned with the safety of passengers. As a result, every employee is now empowered to act in the event of an emergency.

Duhigg points out that effective leaders do not let crises pass without seizing the possibilities created by those events. Instead, they use crises to transform organizations and effect organizational change.

Chapter 6: Key Points

- Every organization has institutional habits; these habits are what make them run.
- Destructive organizational habits are the products of leaders who avoid thinking about the culture and let it develop without guidance.
- Crises give leaders an opportunity to change destructive habits and transform troubled organizations into effective ones.

HOW TARGET KNOWS WHAT YOU WANT BEFORE YOU DO

When Companies Predict (and Manipulate) Habits

The Big Idea

Retail chains like Target are always seeking to grow profits. In order to do this, they continually strive to understand the habits of individual shoppers in order to better market towards their unique buying preferences.

As a result of research and sophisticated data analysis techniques, retailers now know that habits are highly influential in nearly every shopping decision. In fact, they're so powerful that more than 50 percent of customers' decisions are made in the moment when they see a product on the shelf — despite the fact that they've written down lists of exactly what they want to buy. This extensive knowledge of habits now powers the marketing sales and efforts of many retail stores.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

This chapter focuses on the increasing ability of corporations to target consumers through their shopping habits. In fact, every shopper relies on habits to guide their purchasing decisions. Every shopper's habits are different; therefore companies have learned how to target these differences by leveraging scientific research.

For retailers and other businesses, the more you know about a shopper, the better you can predict their buying

patterns. In fact, people's buying habits are most likely to change when they go through a major life event (such as marriage, a birth, or divorce). By recognizing those events, retailers can tailor their marketing and sales efforts to meet specific needs (baby clothes, cradles, etc.) and boost sales.

Of course, every business wants consumers to accept new products and services. To achieve this goal, they rely on a neurological fact — that our brains crave "familiarity" because familiarity helps us purchase products without becoming overwhelmed by endless decisions. Therefore, grouping new products with familiar ones is key to the public's acceptance of those new products.

Chapter Summary

At the core of this chapter is a simple but important fact: if you dress a new "something" (such as a consumer product or service) with old habits, it becomes easier for the public to accept.

Duhigg cites the example of a new song on the radio. Listeners will sometimes reject the song because it doesn't sound familiar. However, if the DJ "sandwiches" that song between accepted and familiar songs, listener acceptance for the new song will increase.

He also cites the example of retail giant Target. Target is highly focused on data-driven analysis for purposes of customer profiling and predictive marketing. In one of their most profitable segments, "Mom and Baby," Target is able to identify when a woman is pregnant. This information gives them the ability to target expectant mothers with coupons and other forms of direct marketing.

Initially, Target ran into an unexpected problem: women weren't always happy when they received "Mom and Baby" marketing materials. In fact, some became angry because they didn't want others in their family to know. The solution was to use the "familiarity" technique: Target sent the expectant mothers ordinary coupons and sandwiched the

“Mom and Baby” ads in-between them. That way, the mailings looked like familiar advertisements and disguised the fact that they were actually designed for expectant mothers. As a result, the incidence of complaints from expectant mothers decreased and Target’s sales in the “Mom and Baby” segment exploded.

Chapter 7: Key Points

- Habits are highly influential in nearly every shopping decision.
- More than 50 percent of customers’ decisions are made at the moment those shoppers see the product on the shelf.
- Extensive knowledge of habits now powers the marketing sales and efforts of most major retail stores.
- To market a new habit, it’s necessary to understand how to make the novel seem familiar.

SADDLEBACK CHURCH AND THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT
How Movements Happen

The Big Idea

In this chapter, Duhigg analyzes the power of habit as it applies to societal and religious movements. He focuses his analysis on the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott of the 1950s. Duhigg's thesis is that societal movements "rely on social patterns that begin as the habits of friendship, grow through the habits of communities, and are sustained by new habits that change participants' sense of self."

Breaking Down the Big Idea

The author demonstrates that a social movement succeeds when it completes three stages. First, a movement *starts* because of the social habits of friendship and the strong ties between close acquaintances. Then, a movement *grows* because of the habits of a community and the "weak ties" that hold neighborhoods and clans together. Finally, a movement *endures* because a movement's leaders give participants new habits that create a fresh sense of identity and a feeling of ownership.

Chapter Summary

Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat to a white rider was the spark that ignited the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. This is a widely cited fact. What isn't noted in the history books, the author says, is that several

other African-Americans had previously taken the same action, and nothing had happened.

The key difference was that, unlike the others, Rosa Parks was well known and well respected within both the white and black communities. When she was arrested it triggered a series of social habits (the habits of friendship) that set a revolution in motion.

The friendships of Rosa Parks weren't enough to start a revolution on their own. What Duhigg calls *weak ties* were also essential to the Civil Rights Movement's success. "Weak ties" are those ties amongst individuals who aren't necessarily friends, but who are part of the same community and therefore subject to peer pressure. This pressure becomes part of the tide of change because individuals want to remain in good standing with the community at large.

The third factor was the Reverend Martin Luther King preaching the message of non-violence. In saying that the Movement was an embrace, King changed the rhetoric from one of war to love. He said the Movement was part of God's plan. This message fed the desire for belief and resulted in new behaviors and new patterns.

In conclusion, Duhigg posits that the Montgomery Bus Boycott was a successful movement for three reasons. First, because the movement started with the action of Rosa Parks and the reactionary friendship habits of her wide group of friends. Second, because the habits of her community's weak ties caused the movement to grow. And third, because the message of Dr. King gave the growing community a message of powerful habits that endured.

Chapter 8: Key Points

- A movement starts because of social habits, but belief in the possibility of change is essential to catapulting the movement forward
- A small group has the potential to grow into a social movement through peer pressure, the community's habits, and the "weak ties" that hold them together.
- The introduction of new habits and social patterns give movements the opportunity to endure and grow beyond a community.

THE NEUROLOGY OF FREE WILL
Are We Responsible for Our Habits?

The Big Idea

In this chapter, Duhigg provides two primary examples to explore the role that habits play in responsibility. The first example is that of a man whose habits released him from responsibility: after murdering his wife during a "sleep terror," he was found innocent because his brain had convinced him he was under attack by an intruder. The second example is of a woman whose habits resulted in her responsibility: after her gambling addiction destroyed her life, she was still required to pay her debt to a casino. Duhigg then uses these examples to discuss how the power of habit might provide a neurological basis for free will.

Breaking Down the Big Idea

In most cases, habits aren't destiny; that is, we can choose our habits once we know how. There are, however, exceptions in which primitive habits govern our action in ways that are beyond our control.

Chapter Summary

Duhigg explores our lack of power over "primitive force" through a case involving an Englishman who killed his wife while in the grip of a sleep terror. The defense's argument was that Brian Thomas was reacting automatically to a "flight or fight" cue from deep within the primitive part of his brain. In effect, his neurology caused him to kill an "intruder" who was very real to him. Based on this

argument, and the fact that the highly remorseful Thomas had never before demonstrated any violence against his wife, he was acquitted. The jury decided that Thomas' primitive habits were to blame. These habits had overwhelmed Thomas' ability to exercise free will.

However, the opposite conclusion was reached in the story of Angie Bachmann, an Iowa housewife who lost over a million dollars due to a gambling addiction. She destroyed her life and ruined her family due to her bad gambling habits. In contrast to the previous example, the court found Angie to be guilty. The jury determined that she was aware of her habits and had the ability and responsibility to change them.

Duhigg concludes that we must take responsibility for the habits that we can control. By identifying and understanding these habits, we have the freedom (and in some cases, the obligation) to change and remake them.

"If you believe you can change—if you make it a habit—the change becomes real. This is the real power of habit: the insight that your habits are what you choose them to be. Once that choice occurs—and becomes automatic—it's not only real, it starts to seem inevitable."

— Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do In Life and Business*

Chapter 9: Key Points

- There are "primitive force" exceptions where we do not have power over our habits. These situations are rare.
- For all other habits, we are responsible for their outcome. If the outcome is negative, we are responsible for changing those habits.
- The first step in changing a habit is to believe that you can create change.

APPENDIX: A READER'S GUIDE TO USING THESE IDEAS

The Big Idea

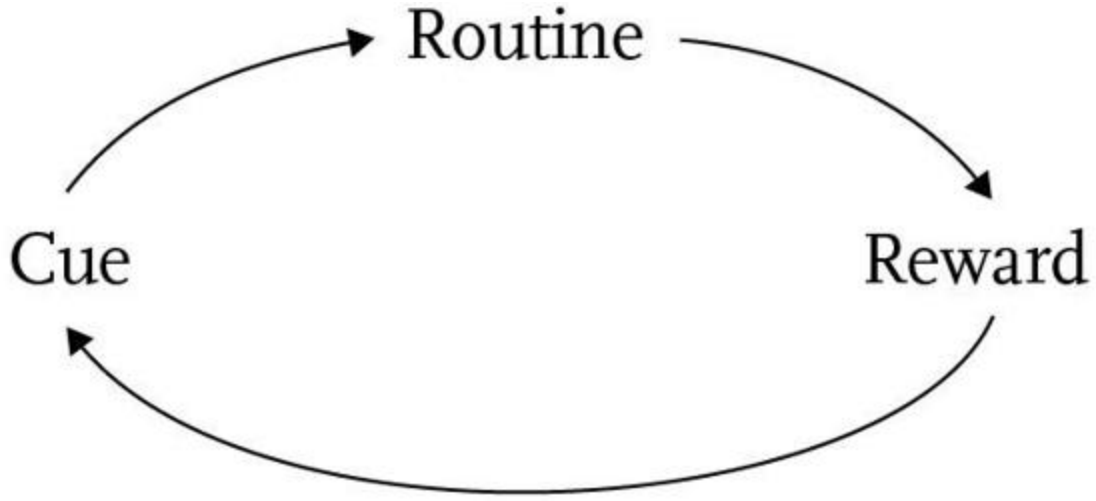
Duhigg concludes his book with a framework for changing habits. He points out there is no one specific way to change habits, but offers a generally applicable process for doing so. As he says, "Change might not be fast and it isn't always easy. But with time and effort, almost any habit can be reshaped."

Breaking Down the Big Idea

In the appendix, the author provides a very specific method for changing personal habits that leverages the Habit Loop. First, you must identify the routine. Second, experiment with rewards to find effective alternatives. Third, isolate the cue that prompts the habit. Fourth, have a plan for putting change into place.

Chapter Summary

As the basis of his framework for habit-change, Duhigg reiterates the elements of the Habit Loop.



The Habit Loop

The first step is to identify the routine in the loop. He uses a personal example — his routine was to eat a chocolate chip cookie every afternoon, which caused him to gain weight. In order to change the behavior, he needed to identify what was driving it.

The second step is to experiment and find an alternative reward. The goal is to identify which craving is driving your routine, and find something to do instead. To continue the author's example, this step would require finding a substitution for eating a cookie. If the author found that his craving was for the energy derived from the cookie, then walking around the block may be a suitable alternative. If the author's craving was hunger, then eating an apple may be an effective substitute.

Duhigg suggests you look for patterns and take notes. For his own purposes, after replacing his afternoon cookie with a walk, upon returning to his desk he would write down the first three things that came to his mind, such as, relaxed, saw flowers and not hungry. The act of writing forces a momentary awareness of what you're thinking about or feeling. It also helps you remember what you were thinking at that moment.

Once you've identified the routine and determined the right reward substitute, it's time for the third step: go back and identify the cue. In the case of the cookie, the author determined that the cue wasn't hunger, but the need for a temporary distraction from his work.

After following these steps, you can come up with a written plan. In Duhigg's case, it was simple: at 3:30 p.m., he would walk to a friend's desk and talk for 10 minutes rather than buying a cookie. As he points out, the change didn't take effect immediately, but, in the long run, it worked because he understood how a habit operates. Once he had that understanding, he gained power over it.

Appendix: Key Points

- The first step towards transforming a habit lies in identifying the reward and the routine associated with it.
- Experiment with alternative rewards in order to understand the underlying craving of a habit.
- Identify what triggers a habit by isolating the environmental and behavioral cues that surround it.
- Create a plan that satisfies cravings by offering an alternative reward when habit cues are triggered.

CONCLUSION

> "Obviously, changing some habits can be more difficult . . . . But once you understand how a habit operates—once you diagnose the cue, the routine and the reward—you gain power over it."
>
> — Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do In Life and Business*

In *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg explores the formative impact habit has on our lives. Utilizing both scientific research and anecdotal experience, Duhigg examines the operations of habit on personal, social, and corporate levels.

In Chapter 1, Duhigg explains the Habit Loop and its key components of cue, routine, and reward. He details the important role the basil ganglia region of our brain plays, and highlights the significance of its inability to delineate between good and bad habits.

In Chapter 2, cravings enter the Habit Loop equation. Duhigg examines the ways in which they power the Habit Loop, acting as a connection between cue and reward. For businesses in particular, it is essential that the craving be appropriately rewarded. An undesired reward generates a disinterested customer.

In Chapter 3, Duhigg articulates the Golden Rule of habit change: you can't extinguish a bad habit; you can only change it. He explains that while the cue and reward are initially constants, the routine is flexible.

Chapter 4 details the crucial role of keystone habits. Properly identifying priorities enables change to take root and ripple out. Keystone habits help one to realize "little wins," successes which spill forth into other areas. They also

dislodge old habits, breathing new life into previously stagnant patterns.

In Chapter 5, Duhigg shatters the myth that willpower is an innate character trait. Instead, he asserts that willpower is both a highly learnable skill and the most critical keystone habit to develop for individual success. The best way to strengthen willpower is to make a habit of it.

In Chapter 6, Duhigg turns his attention to the habits of organizations. Good leaders know that all organizations are structured around habits, and bad leaders fail to provide habitual guidance. Duhigg also illuminates the generative potential of crises. Under the right leadership, a crisis can be a moment of positive transformation for the habits of an organization.

Chapter 7 highlights consumer habits, focusing particularly on the role that familiarity plays in the success of a new product. Duhigg emphasizes the importance of surrounding new products with the familiar in order to comfortably and successfully create consumer interest.

In Chapter 8, Duhigg focuses on social and religious movements and their trajectories. Peer pressure and belief in the possibility of change are important elements in catapulting a movement forward and capturing a broad base of community participants. Although a movement can gain some footing through the social habit of friendship, it needs peer pressure and belief in order to spread and grow.

In Chapter 9, Duhigg entertains the role of free will in habit. He asserts that only habits stemming from a primitive place (such as unintentional, altered states of reality such as night terrors) are beyond our power to override. Though some habits are harder to change than others, it is still our decision and responsibility to modify them.

Habit is a powerful and formative actor. It impacts our daily lives constantly — at home, at work, and as a society. Duhigg does not limit himself to showing us how significant a role habit plays, however. He goes on to illuminate the

ways in which we can harness habit to better serve our purposes, whether that be trying to lose a few pounds or getting a company back on track.

RELATED MATERIAL

Reviews and Testimonials

Reviews

"Charles Duhigg ... has read hundreds of scientific papers and interviewed many of the scientists who wrote them, and relays interesting findings on habit formation and change from the fields of social psychology, clinical psychology and neuroscience. This is not a self-help book conveying one author's homespun remedies, but a serious look at the science of habit formation and change."

— Timothy D. Wilson, Sunday Book Review, *New York Times,* March 11, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/11/books/review/the-power-of-habit-by-charles-duhigg.html

"Occasionally, he overreaches ... but overall, *The Power of Habit* — whose 371 pages include 60 pages of notes — makes a compelling case about a pervasive but little-known aspect of how we operate as humans, businesses, and societies. We'd all benefit from paying more attention to our habits."

— Melissa Allison, Book Review, *Seattle Times,* April 9, 2012, http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/text/2017910281.html

"According to this instructional text for readers habituated to unhelpful ways, changing those bad habits for good habits isn't rocket science — it's brain science .... Unlike other exhortations with titles that promise empowerment, this admonitory entry is supported by interviews, neurological studies, and empirical histories. Copious notes and a 'Reader's Guide to Using These Ideas' are appended.

For self-help seekers, a more convincing book than most."

— *Kirkus Book Reviews,* https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/charles-duhigg/power-of-habit/#review

Testimonials

"William James once observed that ninety-nine percent of human activity is done out of mere habit. In this fascinating

book, Charles Duhigg reveals why James was right, documenting the myriad ways in which our habits shape our lives. Do you want to know why Febreze became a bestselling product? Or how Tony Dungy gets the most out of his football players? Or how the science of habits can be used to improve willpower? Read this book."

— Jonah Lehrer, author of *Imagine: How Creativity Works, How We Decide,* and *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*

"*The Power of Habit* is not a magic pill but a thoroughly intriguing exploration of how habits function. Charles Duhigg expertly weaves fascinating new research and rich case studies into an intelligent model that is understandable, useful in a wide variety of contexts, and a flat-out great read. His chapter on 'keystone habits' alone would justify the book."

— David Allen, author of *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*

"Charles Duhigg's thesis is powerful in its elegant simplicity: confront the root causes of our behavior, accept them as intractable, and then channel those same cravings into productive patterns. His core insight is sharp, productive, and useful."

— Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great* and *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*

Author's Dictionary

- **Chunking:** a term grounded in psychology — the brain's process by which a set of actions becomes a routine — it is a key component in the formation of habits.
- **Cue:** a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode and select a habit to use.
- **Habit Loop:** a loop that consists of three elements: Cue, Routine, and Reward.

- **Golden Rule of Habit Change:** you can’t extinguish a bad habit; you can only change it.
- **Inflection points:** times at which individuals or institutions begin to experience the greatest degree of change.
- **Keystone Habit**: an influential habit that, when shifted, has the ability to ignite a chain reaction, create other habits, and transform all patterns.
- **Peer Pressure**: the pressure felt by the individual to conform to group expectations.
- **Reward**: Something you receive in exchange for an action. Your brain then takes this reward into account when determining whether or not a particular habit loop is worth remembering for the future.
- **Routine:** a regular sequence of actions, which can be physical, mental, or emotional.
- **Willpower Habits:** self-designed habits of willpower used to overcome moments of pain.